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REVIEWS.

AN ECONOMIC THEORY OF HISTORY.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH THOUGHT. A study in the Economic Interpretation of History. By Simon N. Patten, Ph. D. New York and London: The Macmillan Company. 1899.

Whatever Dr. Patten has to say in regard to the science in which he has achieved so enviable a reputation is worthy of the closest attention; and the book before us, the most ambitious work he has yet undertaken, cannot fail to attract more than ordinary attention. To account for human progress, however, by ascribing it in large measure to the efforts of men to obtain the means of gaining a livelihood will no doubt cause serious meditation even on the part of those who have followed unhesitatingly our author's sociological theories, which have from time to time appeared in the printed reports of the Academy of Political and Social Science. Bald materialism like this, notwithstanding the tendency on the part of a certain class of English writers to lay a special stress upon the influence of economic forces, will scarcely be able to satisfy the keen interest men have always manifested in the long and wonderful story of their race. These remarks, however, should determine no one's intention to read or not to read what we can scarcely refrain from calling one of the most interesting volumes we have encountered in many a day.

To illustrate his theory, Dr. Patten has chosen England, whose advantages in this respect are so obvious that but few words are necessary to elucidate the subject. Geographically isolated, England cut herself still farther off from external influences by the Reformation, since which time she has, in spite of a vigorous foreign policy, been but slightly influenced by the great stream of world-wide influences. The small aristocratic circle interested in the problems of diplomacy and the shifting incidents arising from international relations have, to be sure, always watched with keenest

solicitude affairs and events across the Channel; but to the great bulk of the people, absorbed in the cares and strifes of internal matters, the outside world appeals in a very slight manner. An objective study of English life and thought is, therefore, not only possible, but also an extremely easy task. For, impervious to extraneous influences and little affected by governmental agencies, each crop of ideas has, as it were, been indigenous and as such it has sprung up, flowered, and passed away without let or hindrance. Dr. Patten is therefore, inclined to the opinion—and few will perhaps gainsay him—that, if there are such laws governing the evolution of national thought as sociologists would have us believe, England during the past few centuries offers very favorable opportunities for the study of such laws.

Starting with these ideas, our author proceeds to elaborate his theory, which, to quote his own words, is as follows: "Survival is determined and progress created by a struggle for the requisites of which the supply is insufficient. These requisites are the goods for which men strive, or the means by which they may avert evil. A group of such definite objects, upon which the life and happiness of each race depends, always exists. The environment formed by this group of economic objects surrounding and supporting a given race changes with the several objects in which the interests of the race are centered." With the new objects, continues Dr. Patten, come new activities and new requisites for survival. Novel conditions like these, therefore, modify the motives, instincts, and habits of the race, while new habits of thought and action are formed. Institutions, customs, and ideals are thus modified and civilization itself is reconstructed. These changes it is claimed, take place in regular order; and in each environment the series repeats itself. These ideas, enlarged, constitute what is called the economic theory of history.

It is of course a commonplace observation that one type of civilization develops where land is plentiful and water scarce, and another where the converse is true. Nor can it be denied that where any particular commodity is scarce, the thoughts

of men are largely occupied in the problem of satisfying the want thus felt. We think, however, that sufficient stress is not laid on the fact that those who are dissatisfied with their surroundings may, if they possess sufficient ambition, remove to some other point. To our mind, therefore, there is a psychological element in this matter that partially escapes Dr. Patten. On the relative importance of environment and heredity, however, our author speaks out with unusual boldness. He thinks that every change in environment tends to modify the national character, and gives rise to a new epoch in thought. Heredity, on the other hand, gives increased vividness to the sensory ideas and arouses those motor activities necessary to survival.

While it is easy to recognize in every modern society the four classes designated as clingers, sensualists, stalwarts, and mugwumps, it is not always easy to follow Dr. Patten in his illustrations. Nor does he himself unreservedly adhere to the theory he so boldly enunciates; for he recognizes clearly enough that economic conditions do not alone shape national character, but they "give rise to habitual motor reactions," and these may be connected with some new exciting cause. One or two other propositions may be much more readily granted. That every transition, for example, from an old to a new environment develops a new type of man, is a fact too obvious for comment. Dr. Patten contends that economists arise from the new type and philosophers from the old. From this point of view, he recognizes in English thought three epochs. "In the first, Hobbes states the problem of the age without solving it; Locke is the economist on the upward curve; Newton is the thinker on the downward curve. In the second, Mandeville states the problem; Hume is changed from an economist into a philosopher; and Adam Smith, from a philosopher into an economist. The third epoch, beginning with Malthus, ends when Mill is transformed into a philosopher, and Darwin into a biologist."

The space at our command will not admit of the notice this most suggestive book merits, but it may be remarked in concluding that subsequent chapters amplify the ideas already

mentioned. There is an admirable analysis of Calvinism, and an unusually clear picture of the moralists of the last century. Methodism also comes in for a full discussion, and the somewhat novel idea is advanced that, to comprehend the change in English thought marked by the religious movement of that sect, one must unite the work of Wesley and Adam Smith. The latter, in our author's opinion, transformed from morals all principles except that of sympathy, and this Wesley appropriated for his sect. Dr. Patten therefore maintains that Methodism and economics tended to create a non-moral state of mind, which has ever since been a marked characteristic of the English race, in spite of its conscientiousness. Dr. Patten's book is pervaded by a broad religious sentiment which finds frequent expression, but nowhere more forcibly than in these words with which he ends his book: "Not the laws of life, nor of reason, nor of economics, reveal the complete plan on which God works. . . . The narrower field of the old natural religion was due to the emphasis of God as Cause. But God as Life enters into many more relations with men, and his presence is revealed in many more ways. The whole of nature and the whole of man, active as well as passive, can be called upon for evidence of God as Life, and this evidence will contain all the elements that are contained in revealed religion, and will emphasize the same facts, hopes, and possibilities. Natural religion is not merely a religion of knowledge, nor is revealed religion merely a religion of faith. Nor does the one tell merely of a God in nature, and the other of a God incarnate. The principle of incarnation is an essential tendency in all life, and is revealed wherever the higher types come in contact with the lower. B. J. R.

"THE THEORY OF THE LEISURE CLASS."

ONE of the most curious books that has come to our table this season is Thorstein Veblen's "Theory of the Leisure Class."[1] He proposes to discuss the place and value of the

[1] Macmillan Company, 1899.